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SUMMARY

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HOW TO COPE WITH THE URGENT NEED FOR STATISTICAL SERVICES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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HOW TO COPE WITH THE URGENT NEED FOR STATISTICAL SERVICES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

by

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Summary.

When working as UN-expert in Indonesia in the years 1960-61, I saw that in developing countries there really was an urgent need for establishing and improving many kinds of economic, cultural and social statistics. Relevant and reliable quantitative knowledge about the development of the economic situation and the social and cultural structure of the country are necessary both for the government and for the public and private enterprises in their efforts to make more efficient plans for the future and for observing if their policies really have influenced the development in the desired direction and for anticipating the consequences of different competing plans.

To meet this urgent need for statistical information we must first educate a sufficiently large number of statisticians who can produce the information needed and can correctly interprete the statistical information available. Further the trained statisticians must be effectively organised to get the new data needed as rapidly as possible. This requires that a statistical research and development centre is built up in which the best trained statisticians work as a team with the goal to function as a dynamic force doing the hard work to get the new activities started on a sound base, and analyzing the results obtained. This centre must also be responsible for training the newcomers in the statistical field. During the first five to ten years it will be necessary to get experts from abroad to build up such a centre because the few outstanding statisticians available in these countries are already overloaded with administrative work. These statisticians will need the centre as a brainstrust for working out the "blue prints" of the new activities.

Corresponding to these three main tasks, such a statistical research and development Centre should contain three departments: a Field Survey Department, a Research Department and a Statistical Academy.

My experience in attempts to produce good statisticians speaks for a system of education, where the time is about evenly divided into three parts: Hearing lectures, Reading books, and Doing exercises or performing research tasks. These means of learning should be used at every stage of the development towards a degree. In the beginning the lectures play a relatively larger role than at the later stages when reading literature and research tasks become the main tools. The lectures and seminars should put the main efforts in making the students interested in the subject, researchminded, and aware of the high quality requirements on reliable statistical information to be produced.

The students should become selfcritical and obtain the habit of trying to estimate the probability that a statement made is wrong. They have to learn to think systematically and constructively. Without being succesful in developing the pupils' mind in this direction the pupils will not master statistics and become really useful for improving and enlarging the production of statistical information needed. We have thus to remember that it is not enough that the new statisticians have a sufficiently large knowledge in statistics. They must also become quality minded and accept the ethos of science before good results of the training process can be expected in the long run.

The brightest students must be considered as the most valuable assets for building up an effective statistical service organization for the country. It will pay off to encourage them to continue their studies up to the upper limit of their potentialities. If the teaching staff of the Academy had one fully competent professor in charge of the further education of the Bachelors of Statistics it would be possible to prepare them well before they go abroad for postgraduate work on Ph.D. level. It must be considered as a goal for all statistically less developed countries to have competent professors in statistics of their own who can take over the main responsibility for making their countries well developed in the field of statistics. A country well developed in the statistical field has, in my opinion, good chances of making rapid progress also in other fields needing planned efforts.

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